

DECLARATION

THE FOYLE AREA (CONTROL OF OYSTER FISHING) REGULATIONS 2008

SUSPENSION OF OYSTER FISHING IN THE FOYLE AREA

I, Sharon McMahon, Designated Officer of the Loughs Agency, Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission, hereby certify that The Commission is satisfied that it is necessary and expedient for the conservation and protection of native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) to declare fishing for such oysters suspended in the entirety of The Foyle Area, as defined by The Foyle Area (Control of Oyster Fishing) Regulations 2008 as amended 2010, for the periods listed below.

“the defined mouth” in relation to the River Foyle, means the mouth of that river as defined by instrument dated 8th February 1864 made under section 17 of the Salmon Fishery (Ireland) Act 1863;

“Lough Foyle” means those waters in the Foyle Area bounded on the north or seaward side by an imaginary straight line drawn between Greencastle Fort in the County of Donegal and the Martello Tower at Magilligan Point in the County of Londonderry and bounded on the south by the defined mouth of the River Foyle;

“the River Foyle” means all of the River Foyle upstream of the defined mouth of the River Foyle;

“seaward of Lough Foyle” means those waters in the Foyle Area which lie seawards of an imaginary straight line drawn between Greencastle Fort in the County of Donegal and the Martello Tower at Magilligan Point in the County of Londonderry.

Dates of suspension of fishing in The Foyle Area

Fishing for native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) is **suspended** in the entirety of The Foyle Area, as defined by The Foyle Area (Control of Oyster Fishing) Regulations 2008 as amended 2010, for the periods listed below;

- 1st February 2019 at 06:00 hrs to 31st March 2019 at 18:00 hrs

Reasons for suspension of fishing in The Foyle Area

In order to reduce the amount of stress being put upon the Native Oyster population in Lough Foyle, and in order to retain an acceptable biomass of spawning stock in the population, fishing effort has been reduced by suspending fishing for Native Oysters for the remainder of the regulation season.

A survey and review of the Native Oyster population remaining in the Lough after the fishing period (October to November 2018) was undertaken in January 2019. After consideration of the results from this survey it has been decided that the fishery will be closed for the entirety of February and March 2019. This closure is to ensure the retention of the remaining stock on the beds in order to contribute to the adult broodstock and improve potential spawning and settlement in the 2019 season and beyond.

Removal of 100% of the stock above the minimum landing size is not sustainable. It is advisable to retain a proportion of the spawning stock above 80mm in the fishery in order to allow for stock replenishment and the achievement of effective spawning for the 2019 spawning season. Removal of large proportion of stock over 80mm from the fishery this season, could have a significant negative impact on broodstock and could potentially have a highly detrimental effect on future recruitment to the population.

Stock assessments over the last number of years have shown a reduction in the frequency of young age classes of native oysters in the population with a shift towards the older demographics. This shift is as a result of poor settlement events in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Removal of further stock over 80mm, from the fishery, this season, could exacerbate the situation by further reducing the density of reproductive adults potentially contributing to the population. Therefore, fishing activity in February and March 2019 could have a highly detrimental effect on future recruitment to the population.

NOW THEREFORE

In pursuance of the said Regulations

I HEREBY SUSPEND OYSTER FISHING IN THE FOYLE AREA AS DEFINED BY THE FOYLE AREA (CONTROL OF OYSTER FISHING) REGULATIONS 2008 AS AMENDED 2010.

From:

- 1st February 2019 at 06:00 hrs to 31st March 2019 at 18:00 hrs

Signed: S. McMahon (Designated Officer)
Sharon McMahon

Dated: 21st January 2019